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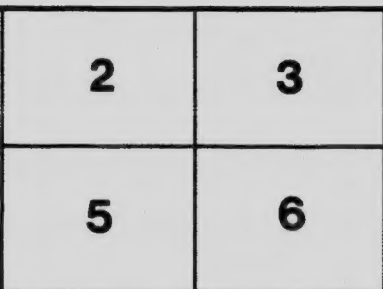
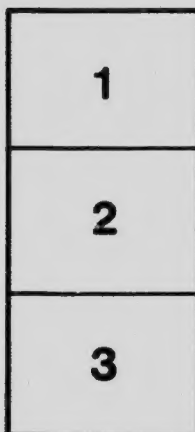
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THE LAYMAN'S POINT OF VIEW.

A PAPER GIVEN BY COLONEL O'BRIEN,
AT A JOINT MEETING OF THE RURAL
DEANERIES OF EAST AND WEST
SIMCOE, HELD IN BARRIE, ON FEB-
RUARY 10th, 1903.

Professional men generally are inclined to magnify their office, to exalt its dignity, dwell upon its importance, and carefully guard against any encroachment upon its privileges. This inclination, natural in itself, and, within certain limits, laudable in its object, has a tendency nevertheless to make the professor believe, or act as though he believed, that the Profession was made for him, and not he for the profession. He is apt to regard the subject as of more importance than the object, and the interests of the profession as of more consequence than the interests of those for whose benefit it was instituted. From this tendency members of the clerical profession are by no means exempt. Indeed they are

more liable to it than those of the secular professions. In the first place their calling being of the noblest, inasmuch as it deals with man in his relation to what is spiritual rather than to that which is material—to that which is eternal rather than that which is temporal—to lead men up to Heavenly things rather than to aid them in obtaining success in earthly things to exercise authority rather than to render service, all such considerations, unless governed by a deep conviction that he is himself but a servant of his Heavenly Master, and but a steward of the things in which he ministers, tend to make the man think more highly of himself than he ought to think, and to take a pride in his profession in its relation to man rather than to God. In the second place, he has not the advantage which men of other professions have in their daily intercourse with their fellows, and with the world at large, by means of which, as individuals, they are constantly schooled and disciplined, their errors corrected, their mistakes pointed out, eccentricities kept down, their mental powers developed, and that general knowledge of men and things acquired which can be gained only by acquaintance with the world. The cleric, on the other hand, is comparatively isolated. He is regarded as standing apart, and on a different plane from his fellow men. All his sayings and doings are subject to severe and often acrimonious criticisms, but the criticism does not reach his ears, or if it does it comes through some distorted, probably ill-natured, channel,

and therefore does harm rather than good. There is no one who ventures to point out defects which are obvious to everyone but himself, and which he would gladly remedy if only he was aware of them. He errs through ignorance and finds out his mistakes only by their evil consequences. If there is any truth in these observations they apply with most force to the clergy in rural districts, and especially to missionaries in remote places. The clergy in cities and towns are less isolated, have more intercourse with others and with the world, and are subject to more of that friction which is an essential part of the education of a man whose work is the guidance and direction of others. Nor are the laity without blame in this matter. Their natural respect for their clergy is apt to make them forget that after all ministers are but men,—subject to all the weaknesses, infirmities and passions of men,—liable to the same temptations,—apt to fall into the same errors. Not realizing this they make demands upon the character of their minister which it is not in human nature to meet, and when these demands are not satisfied they are offended. The parishioner has no right to expect that his pastor will be a saint, however he may strive to attain that degree, or that he will be free from human weaknesses; but he has a right to expect that he will, relying upon help from above, try to make his daily life consistent with his teaching, and an example for his people to follow; that he will take an intelligent interest in their pursuits, and occupations; that to him in times of trial and

affliction they may confidently go for sympathy, if not for wise and kindly counsel. They have a right further to expect that in the discharge of his duties he will be guided by those rules of common sense which govern men in all other affairs, but which parsons often seem to think do not apply to them. "Sanctified common sense" is said to have been one of the great attributes of the late Archbishop of Canterbury, and no more useful attribute could be desired. The parishioner further has a right to expect that the parson will devote reasonable time to systematic, not irregular, parochial visiting, and especially to the sick in his parish, even, when it is fitting, to those not members of his congregation; that he will be regular and punctual in giving the services of the church, and not easily daunted by difficulties arising from weather or any other cause; that he will read the service plainly, distinctly, deliberately and reverently, so that the illiterate, and those unfamiliar with the words, may be able to follow and profit by them. The layman who goes to church to worship, and such only need be considered, besides joining in the service, desires to hear something that will remove his thoughts for the time being from the cares and troubles of his daily life, and will help him on his way when he is obliged to resume them. He does not want anything said that will recall them,—any lecture or discourse on subjects he probably understands better than the preacher, still less upon those of a sensational character bearing upon popular topics that he has been hear-

ing about all the week, and wants to escape from. Topics such as are advertised in the Saturday paper to be dealt with by popular preachers—one of the latest bearing the picturesque title of "Grace, Grit and Greenbacks," or the more practical one of "Coal at \$10 a ton," have no attraction for him. Nor does he go to listen to a concert any more than to a popular lecture, consequently the music of "male quartettes" or soprano soloists are not to his taste when made to form part of what should be a devotional service. Nor does he want anything in the nature of symbolism or ritualism beyond what is to be found within the four corners of the Book of Common Prayer. He does not understand, he is suspicious and, in general, he dislikes innovation in the form of service to which he is accustomed. More harm has been done to the church by clergymen forcing changes of this nature on unwilling parishioners than they can undo in a lifetime. In saying this the writer is not expressing his own feeling only, but what he knows to be that of the great body of the laity in this Diocese, especially in the rural districts.

Such is a dry statement of fact, outline of what the parishioner thinks he has a right to expect from his minister. It is for the latter to give to the form such spiritual vitality as will make it out of the nature of a compact and by means of it arrive at the noblest results of which it is capable.

While the idea of a compact between minister and people may be distasteful, yet under the voluntary system a com-

fact for the discharge of mutual duties does and must exist. It is laid down in the bonds given for the support of the minister in missionary parishes and it is the basis of the support of our own clergy. What then are the duties of the people toward their minister? Speaking from the purely material aspect of the relationship, first the duty lies upon them of providing for the temporal needs of the minister by punctually and regularly paying the stipend agreed upon, and that not grudgingly as paying a disagreeable debt, but cheerfully and willingly as fulfilling a duty not only to man but also to God. Knowing, too, how hard it is for the missionary to make both ends meet upon the means allotted to him, and feeling, as in many cases he must feel, how little he himself would like to be in a similar position as regards worldly wealth—carrying on a constant struggle to live as he is expected to live—unable to save anything for his family or to lay up a provision for his old age—with few sources of enjoyment and many of discomfort both of body and mind—feeling all this he should take every opportunity of helping his minister with kindly deeds and words, not as conferring a favour on the man, but as aiding in a common work in which both were concerned. He should feel it a duty to take any part for which he was fitted in work for the Church. He should not think, as some seem to do, that in coming to church he was fulfilling all his duty, and conferring a favour on the parson as well—ready to express disapproval of the sermon if it

was not quite to his taste, or was a few minutes too long; grumbling at the collections to which he gives the smallest sum he decently can—in short treating both church and minister as among the mortifications of life which have to be endured with as good grace as possible.

Complaint is made, and justly made, that the sums given by church people for the various branches of church work to which they are asked to contribute fall far short of what might be reasonably expected, and compare unfavourably with the amount given for similar objects by members of other denominations. One cause of this is that the laity in general are not made to understand what is expected of them. They are not presented with any clear business-like statement of the financial affairs of the church, of the work which is undertaken, of the funds required to carry it on, and of the means by which it is proposed to obtain them. Frequent calls are made upon them for various missionary objects, but without any systematic information which will enable them really to understand what they are giving to, or to apportion the amount which they can devote to such objects to the various funds for which aid is required. In consequence of this a large class of people who would give liberally if only they understood what they are asked to give to, give nothing at all, or, if they happen to be present when the collection is being taken up, just give their ordinary Sunday offering of five or ten cents as the case may be. In religious as well as in secular af-

fairs, where money is concerned, proper business methods are necessary for success.

Every layman who has the interest of his church at heart is gratified at hearing of the earnest enquiries now made as to why the church is not progressing and succeeding as she should and the various means proposed to ensure that progress and success. But whatever means are adopted they can succeed only by united effort of both clergy and laity working together in a spirit of harmony, good will, and self sacrifice. It is therefore the reverse of gratifying to him when he sees so many of the clergy not only taking no part in these great movements but doing nothing to encourage the members of their congregations to take their share in the work. Such men are a source of weakness rather than of strength, and there evidently is a want of ecclesiastical discipline and control when such a state of things is allowed to continue. There are men in the church who have yet to learn that congregationalism is not a feature of the Church of England, that they were ordained for the work of the Church, and that the Church was not established for them.



